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ABSTRACT

David Clavier advances four arguments for placing administrative control of public relations education programs in the hands of journalism departments: (1) tradition, (2) professional associations, (3) essential skills, and (4) resources. However, there is a trend away from teaching public relations in journalism departments because such curricula tend to emphasize journalism courses and fail to look beyond print media. Journalism's writing skills, professional organizations, and resources tend to be too narrow in focus for the needs of public relations practitioners, and journalistic orientation toward objectivity is at odds with public relations' goal of persuasion. Speech communication departments should assume administrative control of public relations programs for three reasons. First, the public relations specialist's goals of interpersonal, small group, public, and mass communication using print and electronic media are compatible with the existing perspective of speech communication. Second, the need for social-scientific and behavioral theory research can easily be met by departments of speech communication. Third, many mass media programs are closely aligned with speech communication, mass media, and journalism. Speech communication departments can better meet the needs of public relations education than can journalism, by providing a broader grounding in communication theory and practice. (HTH)

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WHO SHOULD ADMINISTER THE PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAM?

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ABSTRACT

This article seeks to refute the claim that journalism should administer the public relations program. It examines issues of tradition, professional associations, essential skills, and resources. Also examined are some "minor" misunderstandings concerning the relationship between journalists and public relations practitioners. Throughout it is argued that journalism is ill equipped to administer a program in public relations and that the most suitable administrative agency is speech communication.

WHO SHOULD ADMINISTER THE PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAM?

When discussing public relations education two very important questions need to be addressed: First, what should be the curriculum of a public relations program and, second, how should such a program be administered?

Over the past thirteen years this first question has been liberally discussed and with few exceptions, has resulted in a general consensus. Most educators and practitioners tend to agree that public relations specialists should be well grounded in both print and electronic media, oral and written communication; have a knowledge of business principles; be trained in the social sciences and survey research; have a broad background in literature and the humanities; and develop an area of specialty depending on specific career interests. There is little doubt that public relations education is viewed as requiring an interdisciplinary approach.

This interdisciplinary focus for public relations education can be seen in the results of surveys and the remarks of public relations specialists. Walker's "End-of-decade Survey" reveals that the areas of public relations has expanded throughout the last decade.[1] Whereas in the early 70's public relations was taught as a mass media field, today it goes beyond the print media to

include oral and interpersonal communication, training in electronic media, and the social and behavioral sciences. Walker believes that public relations education needs to be identified even more strongly as an interdisciplinary field.

Nager points out that mass media and interpersonal communication must be integrated with traditional public relations.[2] He emphasizes the importance of research suggesting that, "the technological pressures on public relations education to equip students with the foundations for computerized information systems, word processing, and data-based research and evaluation will extend considerably beyond the limited one course undergraduate research course in many programs."[3] Greyser echoes this perspective stating that, "beyond the traditional training, a public relations specialist, to be successful, must have a strong grounding in the liberal arts, serious training in social science research methods and a solid grounding in business administration."[4]

Public relations education is still growing. There is a constant need for reassessment and revision. However, the field, as a whole, seems to be moving in a healthy direction by advocating a broad, interdisciplinary approach to public relations training in higher education.

Beyond this general agreement on the breadth of public relations education there seems to be little

consensus as to how, and by whom public relations programs should be run. Traditionally, journalism has dominated public relations education. But, there is clear evidence of dissatisfaction with a journalistic approach to the administration of these programs. This is marked by a trend away from journalism as the "home" department of public relations toward speech communication, business and an increasing demand for independent programs.

Lindsay remarked that,

> "The greatest need is for a molding of resources university-wide, but particularly in schools of journalism, schools of business administration and departments of speech communication. Where administration responsibility for such programs will rest depends on the degrees of initiative exercised by the three units. At present initiative is with schools of journalism and mass communication. But increasingly the other two areas are becoming involved. It is imperative that the resulting territorial scrambles not lessen the effectiveness of institutional efforts."[5]

Two important points need to be emphasized from Lindsay's thoughts. First, journalism does not have an inherent or inevitable claim to public relations education. Second, in the ensuing scramble for control of public relations education, the ultimate objective of developing a course of study best meeting the needs and

career aspirations of the public relations student must not be lost.

Because of phenomenal growth in the area of public relations education during the past decade, many schools are confronted with the problem of reconciling the divergent interests of several departments when developing and administering such a program. The process of designing such a program is often complicated and may create intense competitive rivalries between academic units. This is particularly true when each unit feels perfectly justified in taking control. In order to avoid serious schisms among university departments, when cooperation within an interdisciplinary program is essential, an examination of the justifications for placing administrative control in the hands of one department or another is in order.

Since journalism remains the major administrative unit controlling public relations programs, it seems reasonable to start by examining their claims to sovereignty. The claims of speech communication, or any other unit for that matter, must be judged against the validity of journalisms' case.

The purpose of this paper is to: 1. examine the rationale for placing public relations education in the hands of Journalism; 2. argue that, given the current state of the profession, Journalism is not the most suit-

able administrative agency; and 3. propose that the most suitable alternative to Journalism is the department of Speech Communication.

THE CASE FOR JOURNALISM

The rationale for placing administrative control in the hands of journalism is ably expressed by Clavier in an ACA Bulletin article.[6] He advances four arguments: 1. tradition, 2. professional associations and organizations, 3. essential skills, and 4. resources. Two minor "misunderstandings" which need clarification are addressed: the relationship between journalists and public relations practitioners and the scope of public relations training within a school of journalism.

Tradition:

First, Clavier argues that journalism is the traditional home for public relations practitioners. Originally, the practice of public relations was essentially a publicity function carried on with and through newspapers. As the electronic mass media (radio, TV, and film) became more important, schools of journalism developed the most comprehensive mass communications programs. Accordingly, most public relations practitioners emerged with journalism backgrounds.

Because journalism has been the traditional home for public relations education does not mean it should continue that way. Several changes over the past decade

indicate a shift away from journalism as the home department for public relations education. For the first time journalism departments account for less than half of all public relations programs.[7] A study by Kalupa and Allen indicates that nearly 52 percent of the public relations respondents believe current public relations training is "too journalistic."[8]

This dissatisfaction is reflected in both criticism of course work and staffing. James Measell points out that public relations curriculums in journalism departments tend to be an afterthought.[9] Typically, students are subjected to a series of courses in journalism (news-editing and writing) and then in their junior or senior year, introduced to the fundamentals of public relations. Public relations educators are concerned about the over-abundance of "journalism" instructors with insufficient qualifications and/or desire to teach public relations courses.[10] This criticism suggests a fundamental difference in the attitudes and approaches that journalists and public relations specialists bring to their work.

This journalistic emphasis often leads schools of journalism to develop public relations course work without looking beyond the print media. A case in point is the Fundamentals of Public Relations course taught at Eastern Illinois University where a journalism instructor designed a course in public relation with 13 weeks on the "role of journalism" and two weeks on the "role of

speech communication and mass media." Tiemens quotes a television news editor as saying that too many journalism departments have their heads in the sand, ignoring electronic media, reflecting a strong prejudice against the "electronic boys."[11] It is this type of prejudice which public relations practitioners and educators find so distressing.

Clavier claims that schools of journalism have developed the most comprehensive mass media programs. The facts simply do not support this contention. Niven provides a list of 206 four year instit utions offering a BA degree in broadcasting.[12] Approximately 32 percent of all media programs were associated with speech communication departments, another 30 percent are located in communication departments, 30 percent in independent broadcasting departments, and only 8 percent were associated with journalism. Although these figures were compiled in 1975 and there may well be some shifts, journalism cannot be claimed as the department offering the most comprehensive mass media programs. In fact, these figures seem to point to speech communication as the predominant ally of broadcasting education.

Professional Associations:

The second argument for journalisms' control of public relations education is that the major professional and academic associations for public relations are closely aligned with journalism: the Association for

Education in Journalism (AEJ) and the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA). In fact, the American Council on Education in Journalism (ACEJ) is the accepted accrediting agency for public relations programs.

Journalism is a profession with professional associations. This professionalism may not serve the best interests of public relations education. Tiemens notes that this tradition of "professionalism" has significantly affected the educational objectives of journalism.[13] There is a tendency among journalists to recognize print media as the only viable journalistic form. Many journalists resist any association with electronic media for fear it will contaminate the study of "pure" journalism. While Tiemens speaks to the relationship between journalism and broadcasting, much the same can be said for the relationship between journalism and public relations. Measell and Kalupa and Batement report 320 colleges and universities offer course work in public relations with 117 offering major sequences.[14] Of these programs, only 18 were accredited by the ACEJ in 1980. Public relations teachers report resistance to ACEJ standards because they are "too journalistic." Further, many disapprove of the fact that, as of 1980, the ACEJ accrediting committee did not include a single person with public relations experience.[15]

Although many public relations practitioners and educators come from a journalism background, it is pre-

cisely this "journalistic" background that is the basis for perpetuating a very limited public relations perspective. Programs are designed to meet journalistic standards. Students are grounded in journalistic practices. It is this emphasis on journalistic philosophy and objectives that troubles the public relations practitioner and educator.

Third, Clavier cites a survey conducted by Allen and Kalupa which indicates that journalistic skills training is at the core of journalism public relations programs. The study points out the need for many other communication skills such as organizational communication, inteerpersonal communication, public speaking, broadcasting, marketing, and research. However, Clavier claims that practitioners in the field repeatedly report journalistic skills (writing and editing) as most important.

It seems only reasonable that a journalism dominated program would place journalistic skills at its core. An important question is whether or not such skills belong at the core of public relations training. Clavier's claim is confused by the fact that a report by Kalupa and Allen (which I presume is a published version of the same study Clavier cites) provides no such support.[16] The majority of the respondents in this study found public relations education "too journalistic," with nearly 70 percent agreeing that newspaper training (where editing and writing skills would be finely honed) would not be

particularly important in the future. The overall flavor of the study seems to be that while basic journalism skills are important, they do not represent the core of a sound public relations program.

Plank criticizes the writing skills of public relations graduates. Writing is a basic requirement for employment but exactly what kind of writing is required? Public relations writing requires more than just news-writing skills and more than the traditional newspaper experience. What is needed is training in persuasive writing and presentation of material to management, involving research, problem analysis and strategic development.[17] Fairman concurs with Plank, saying, "many who can write publicity aren't much good at handling abstract ideas--a skill that is necessary in speech writing, reports and much of the non-publicity writing chores that must be done."[18]

Journalistic writing skills are not enough to insure success in the public relations profession. News editing, writing, and the preparation of publications will continue to play a major role in public relations. However, functions such as organizing meetings and special events, preparing speeches, and being interviewed as a company spokesman are shifting public relations away from a journalistic base toward a base of broader communication education.[19]

Journalisms' control of curriculum, staff and professional organizations will undoubtedly lead toward an emphasis of what they believe essential, news editing and writing. This influence may serve to ill prepare the public relations graduate by denying training in a wider range of communication skills so important for success.

Resources:

Clavier's fourth advantage is the accessibility of resources provided to journalism because of their professional school status. He suggests that there is less competition for resources in professional schools, such as journalism, than in schools of arts and sciences.

This argument is difficult to deal with, since it is difficult to generalize from school to school. The financial and admnistrative considerations of various schools will depend on the willingness of university administrations to support expanding programs in the face of shrinking aid. The ease with which any program acquires resources will depend on the financial and political structure of the institution. However, there is no reason to believe that the need for resources would be inordinantly great since most new public relations programs can utilize course and facilities already in existence.

Misunderstandings:

Clavier completes his case for journalisms' control of public relations programs with two issues. These issues may, in fact, be the most important reasons why journalism should not administer a public relations program. The first misunderstanding is the presumed antagonism between journalists and public relations specialists, and the second is the notion that journalism provides too narrow a framework upon which to build a public relations curriculum. These two isues are related and can be treated as one. Both problems emerge from the basic philosophical perspective of journalism as a profession.

Are these issues simply "misunderstandings" that can be easily explained away or do they represent deep seated and inherent prejudices which make journalism an unsuitable administrator of public relations education?

This review has consistently revealed journalists have a bias against public relations. Clearly this is reflected in the curriculum and staffing decision made by schools of journalism. It is reinforced by the lack of representation by public relations specialists on important professional organizations, especially the ACEJ accrediting committee. Schools of journalism seek to train the objective and thorough investigative reporter.[20] Providing objective and reliable information is the cornerstone of the profession. The primary objective of the

public relations specialist is persuasion. Trent and Trent state that the essence of public relations "is strategic two-way communication specifically designed to reinforce and/or modify public opinion on a particular issue, person, product, or idea."[21] A review of the most prominent public relations educators (Cutlip and Center, Bernays, Nolte, Marston, Newsom and Scott, and Simon) finds a consistent definition of public relations which focuses on the persuasive and two-way responsibilities of the practitioner.[22] Two themes run throughout all these definitions of public relations. First, the public relations practitioner is a communications specialist, and second, the public relations practitioner must make use of persuasion.[23]

Because of the professional emphasis that journalists place on objective reporting, there is little wonder that they have difficulty understanding the value and place of persuasion as the focal point of a free society and the practice of public relations. Journalism trains its students to be journalists. This orientation will have considerable influence on the goals and objectives of journalism and, ultimately, on any program they administer. The objective, factual reportage of a journalist is an inadequate and stiltifying orientation for the public relations practitioner. The differences between the goals of a journalist and a public relations specialist may create not only considerable antagonism between them,

but also considerable guilt in the journalist who accepts a public relations assignment.

Bateman, Public Relations Counsel and Associate Professor at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, is "disappointed that public relations programs are dominated by faculty members and administrators who have a strong bias in favor of journalism, and who seem to look down on public relations education and practice."[24] President Ford's first choice as a press secretary, a journalist, quit after just a few months because of the "philosophical misgivings" about his job.[25] The general reaction of the Washington press corp toward a "journalist" who accepts a position as a press secretary is one of mild contempt. That person is no longer considered a reliable source because his loyalty is no longer to the "truth" but to his employer. Thus, his word is distorted and biased. The central function of a public relations practitioner, persuasion, is not considered appropriate behavior for a journalist.[26]

Jackson points out that "journalistic skills are useful for a portion of the job, but journalistic thinking is not. The notion that blindly disseminated information will have an effect in the court of public opinion is discredited everywhere, . . . Emotion is what moves people not facts."[27] This journalistic thinking cannot help but influence the curriculum choices and professional attitudes of instructors. Even though students may

be encouraged to take a variety of courses outside journalism, the underlying philosophy of the major may not be displaced. These attitudes are too deeply seated and would require a kind of professional psychotherapy as treatment. It seems unlikely that a journalist can bridge the gap between objectivity and persuasion, especially when all indications to this point indicate little interest in trying.

The question is why try to modify journalism's philosophy when speech communication specialists already understand the role of advocacy in society. Public relations is a communication vocation and speech communication already has a body of research, theory and practice upon which to build an effective public relations program.

The philosophical differences between journalism and public relations are far too serious to dismiss in any offhand manner. The conflict between journalists and public relations practitioners is inherent to their perceptions of their professions. This antagonism might be overcome in time. However, there seems to be little need for such a cumbersome task when speech communication both shares and understands the purpose of public relations.

THE CASE FOR SPEECH COMMUNICATION

The foregoing discussion provides an illuminating insight into the trends and problems of public relations

education. The feeling among public relations educators and practitioners is that public relations training is "too journalistic." There is dissatisfaction with curriculum, staffing and guidance provided by the professional organizations. Most troubling is the philosophical differences which compound these problems .

Public relations educators and practitioners are demanding change. Now is the time for speech communication to put forth its case as forcefully as possible. The rationale for speech communication department assuming administrative control is expressed in three principles:

1. The goals and objectives of public relations practitioners, such as strategic two-way communication, are clearly compatible with the existing perspective in speech communication.

The public relations specialist is concerned with internal and external communication; with interpersonal, small group, public and mass communication; with print and electronic media. In the broadest sense, public relations is a communications discipline. The breadth and depth of communication skill, theory and research needed can easily be gained from close association with the field of speech communication.

As has already been demonstrated, many speech communication programs are combined with electronic media programs. The field of speech communication has developed theory and research in interpersonal communication, small

group communication, public speaking, organizational communication and intercultural communication--all of which represent essential skills for the public relations specialist.

Where the journalist is concerned with reporting the facts, the public relations practitioner is concerned with interpreting and explaining the facts. The public relations specialist and the speech communication professional both recognize that facts seldom stand alone. They are subject to interpretation and misinterpretation. The job of the public relations practitioner is to place the facts in context; to explain their significance and meaning; to act as a mediator between conflicting perceptions. This is where a grounding in speech communication may well serve the public relations specialist.

2. The need for social-scientific and behavioral theory research can easily be met by departments of speech communication. Bernays has advocated the need for a social-science viewpoint within public relations; a perspective which is growing in the profession.[28]

Speech education in the U.S. has a longer history than that of journalism education, consequently, speech communication is "ahead" of journalism in the emphasis and development of theory and research. Brooks points out that speech has traditionally emphasized skills on the secondary level, theory on the undergraduate level, and

research on the graduate level.[29] Journalism has a more symmetrical pattern of emphasis with skill development across all levels of education. Even though journalism is rapidly changing emphasis, it will take time to develop the theory and research which the public relations specialist needs now.

Speech Communications has a longer history of social-scientific and behavioral research. It can provide a body of theory and the necessary research skills which the public relations specialist needs, now. The advantage of speech communication providing this background is that it can provide both, while sharing research courses with other departments would impose an artificial separation between theory and research which is simply unnecessary.

3. Many mass media programs are closely aligned with speech communication departments or communications departments comprised of speech communication, mass media, and, sometimes, journalism.

Tiemens points out that, "broadcast education belongs within a context of communication or, at least, mass communication."[30] This is born out by the large number of programs throughout the nation that combine speech communication, broadcasting, and journalism. The programs can only benefit by close association with each other.

Public relations must also be placed within a context of communication. Given its interdisciplinary na-

ture, association with speech communication, broadcasting, journalism, business, and a host of other disciplines is essential. But what is most important here is a question of philosophy. What disciplinary association can best prepare the public relations practitioner, in attitude, theory, and skill for his profession. If the argument has been made well, the reader should agree that speech communication affords the best combination of philosophy, skills, theory, and research.

Speech communication departments can better meet the needs of public relations education than journalism. Speech communication is not encumbered by the prejudices of journalism and can provide a broader grounding in communication theory and practice. This is not to say that journalistic skills are not an important part of the training process, but it is important that journalistic skills be emphasized over "journalistic thinking."

Walker writes, "this trend of preparing public relations students as skilled communicators trained in persuasive techniques might have the added advantage of making those students who cannot be absorbed by the needs of the practice more marketable for other fields."[31]

The opportunity for speech communication exists. Now the speech communication discipline must take the initiative and focus on public relations as part of its domain.

ENDNOTES

[1]Albert Walker, "End-of-decade Survey Shows Academic Growth in Public Relations," Public Relations Review, 8 (Sum. 82), 46-60.

[2]Walker, "End-of-decade Survey," 58.

[3]Walker, "End-of-decade Survey," 58-59.

[4]Stephen A. Greyser, "Changing Roles for Practitioners," Public Relations Journal, 37 (Jan. 81), 18-19 and 22-25.

[5]Janet Dyer, "Public Relations Education: Two Surveys," Public Relations Journal, 38 (Feb. 82), 19 and 33.

[6]David E. Clavier, "Public Relations Education in Schools of Journalism," ACA Bulletin, 39 (Jan. 82), 25-56.

[7]Walker, "End-of-decade Survey." 52.

[8]Frank B. Kalupa and T. Harrell Allen, "Future Directions in Public Relations Education," Public Relations Review, 8 (Sum. 82), 37.

[9]James S. Measell, "Public Relations and Speech Communication: Partners in the 80's," ACA Bulletin, 39 (Jan. 82), 35-38.

[10]Kenneth Owler Smith, "Report of the 1981 Commission on Public Relations Education," Public Relations Review, 8 (Sum. 82), 61-70.

[11]Robert K. Tiemens, "The Battle for Broadcast Curriculum," Western Journal of Speech Communication, (Sum. 75), 186.

[12]Harold Niven, "Fourteenth Survey of Colleges and Universities Offering Courses in Broadcasting," Journal of Broadcasting, 19 (Fall 75), 453-495.

[13]Tiemens, "Broadcast Curriculum," 186.

[14]Measell, "Partners," 36; and Frank B. Kalupa and J. Carroll Bateman, "Accrediting Public Relations Education," Public Relations Review, 6 (Spring 80), 19.

[15]Measell, "Partners," 36.

[16]Kalupa and Allen, "Future Directions."

[17]"A Design for Public Relations Education," The Report of the Commission on Public Relations Education, Published by the Foundation for Public Relations Research, 1975, p. 7.

[18]"Design for Public Relations Education," p. 6.

[19]Measell, "Partners," 35-36.

[20]Bert E. Bradley, "Sharing a Public Relations Program with a Department of Journalism," ACA Bulletin, 39 (Jan. 82), 27-29.

[21]Judith S. Trent and Jimmie D. Trent, "Public Relations Education: An Opportunity for Speech Communication," Communication Education, 25 (Nov. 76), 294.

[22]Scott M. Cutlip and Allen H. Center, Effective Public Relations (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1978), p. 16; Edward L. Bernays, Public Relations (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma, 1952), p. 3; Lawrence W. Nolte, Fundamentals of Public Relations: Professional Guidelines, Concepts and Integrations (New York: Pergamon Press, 1974), p. 1; John E. Marston, Modern Public Relations (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1979), p. 3; Doug Newsom and Alan Scott, This is PR, fifth ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1978), pp. 2-8; Raymond Simon, Public Relations: Concepts and Practices, second ed. (Columbus, OH: Grid, Inc., 1980), pp. 5-13.

[23]Bradley, "Sharing Public Relations," 27.

[24]Dyer, "Two Surveys," 33 and Walker, "End-of-decade Survey," 60.

[25]Bradley, "Sharing Public Relations," 28.

[26]Bradley, "Sharing Public Relations," 28.

[27]"The Good and Bad in Education," Public Relations Journal, 38 (Feb. 82) 20.

[28]Measell, "Partners," 37.

[29]Keith Brooks, ed. The Communicative Arts and Sciences of Speech, (Columbus, OH: Charles E. Merrill Books Inc., 1967), pp. 4-5.

[30]Tiemens, "Broadcast Curriculum," pp. 188-189.

[31]Walker, "End-of-decade Survey," 53.